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CLOVIS G. CHAPPELL: THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

**A Thesis
Presented to
the Department of Applied Theology
Asbury Theological Seminary**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology**

**by
Ole Aarvold
May, 1953**

**This certifies the acceptance of this thesis
by the faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary**

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The choice of subject. Although there can be no doubt that the relevance of the pulpit has been seriously questioned in our time, there seems to be at the moment a revival of interest in preaching. In America the widespread hunger for affirmation is in part responsible for a renewed interest in the church's prophetic utterance. Men cannot forever live in a vacuum. As a result of this condition within the Church itself a theologian like Karl Barth and a professor of theology like Henry Farmer of Cambridge are trying to alert the Christian community to a reconsideration of the significance of the pulpit.

In view of this interest in preaching, and because of his own enthusiasm for preaching and preachers, the writer became curious to find out how outstanding American pulpiteers reached the multitudes. Just what kinds of emphases did he bring in his messages? What techniques did he employ to reach the people? To satisfy his curiosity, the writer decided to study rather intensively the sermonic output of an American preacher of note. He chose Clovis Chappell, for several reasons. For one thing, Chappell is reputedly one of today's most popular preachers. When a few years ago

the Christian Century Pulpit¹ conducted a poll of its readers to ascertain who in their opinion were the ten most outstanding ministers in the United States, Dr. Chappell was listed among the number, the only southerner represented. It is said of him that "the common people heard him gladly."² Another reason for the writer's choice is the fact that this man is a Bible preacher with a strong evangelical emphasis. It was expedient, moreover, to choose a man for study whose sermons were readily accessible. In addition to two volumes of lectures, Chappell has published twenty-seven volumes of sermons. Almost all of them were accessible to the writer. Finally, inasmuch as no sizeable study of Chappell's sermons seems to have been made, the writer felt encouraged to write about this man.

The problem stated. This thesis surveys briefly the life of Dr. Clovis G. Chappell and examines critically his sermons in an attempt to discover reasons for Dr. Chappell's fruitful ministry of forty years.

The method of procedure. The writer's procedure

¹ "Ministerial Career of Dr. Clovis Chappell Reviewed," The Charlotte Observer, October 18, 1949.

² Andrew W. Blackwood, The Protestant Pulpit (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 312.

called first for a sketch of the life of the preacher. This is done in chapter two. A man's preaching can be best understood against the background of his own personality. To supplement the scanty material found in Who's Who and other miscellanies, the writer corresponded directly with Dr. Chappell, who kindly furnished him with additional biographical materials.

The main spade work of the thesis is of course the critical examination of the sermons. This is done in chapter three.

A fourth chapter, the final one, summarizes and presents conclusions.

Documentation in this thesis. Where book titles appear in footnotes without an author's name being mentioned, they are to be understood as coming from the pen of Dr. Chappell.

CHAPTER II¹

THE MAN

Home backgrounds. Clovis Gillham Chappell was born January 8, 1882, in Flat Woods, Tennessee. He grew up on a farm in Perry County, which is east of Tennessee River, the youngest son of a large family of six boys and three girls, the children of William and Mary Gillham Chappell.

The community where he grew up was not a religious one. Preaching was only at rare intervals and "Sunday School privileges were poor indeed."² But the Chappell home was Christian, the parents a God-fearing couple who "were constantly sanctifying themselves for the sake of their children."³ They had much faith in prayer. Dr. Chappell refers at times in his sermons to their prayer life. "But father and mother knew how to pray."⁴ His father was "...a man of prayer. He prayed about all his needs..."⁵ His

¹ See section "Documentation in This Thesis", p. 3.

² The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 67.

³ Sermons on the Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), p. 214.

⁴ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 67.

⁵ Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 68.

children never forgot the hour of family prayer⁶ at which time the father read from the Bible and prayed. The heritage which the elder Chappells passed on to their children was indeed a goodly one. Dr. Chappell writes, "If my father and my mother had not given me the moral momentum of unstained parentage, I might be far away from God tonight."⁷

In these days when the sanctity of the home is being invaded by a multitude of distractions it is refreshing to read words like these:

My father and mother had quite a large family of children. But they did not love us as a group simply. They called us each by name and loved us each individually. I love to think of their love for all their children. I like to think also of their love for me....⁸

These parents were careful that from the start their children should have a right idea of God. They made each feel that the heavenly Father loved him and was vitally interested in all that concerned him. In this way the children came to regard God as a friend and not a taskmaster.⁹ It

⁶ When the Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 12.

⁷ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 108.

⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹ The Road to Certainty (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1940), p. 9.

surely is ample testimony to parental devotion and wisdom that all of the children of this Tennessee home became active Christians, and that three sons went into the ministry of the Methodist Church.¹⁰

Here and there in his sermons Dr. Chappell alludes to his boyhood home, to the wholesome atmosphere of an old-fashioned country home.¹¹ Although the house is now in ruins he retains precious recollections of the scenes of his childhood, such as the memory of "the old front gate, and the front porch where Mother used to wait when we came home from school."¹²

... As I think of my own mother I think of one who was sunny and full of laughter, with never a thought of herself. As I think of my father, I think of one who was more rugged and stern, but whose unselfish devotion to his own could no more be doubted than hers....¹³

Nowhere is Dr. Chappell's feeling for his father better portrayed than in these words:

¹⁰ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 67.

¹¹ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 34.

¹² Sermons on New Testament Characters (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924, Sec. ed., 1931), p. 120.

¹³ Chappell's Special Day Sermons (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1936), p. 65.

I see a face strong and tender and pure. I think of one who lived not for himself, but for others, who offered himself as a daily sacrifice for the service of those he loved. I think of one who could be stern at times, but who could also be as gentle as a mother. I remember one night as a lad, when it was thought that I could not live till morning. It was Father who came to tell me about it, and to help me to face it unafraid. It was he that undertook, the best he could, to gather me into his fatherly arms, and to hand me into the arms of that infinite Father from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name.¹⁴

His affection for his brothers and sisters is shown in the warmth of his occasional references to their early associations together.

Of his first service at a certain college church he writes: "Among those present was my oldest brother, a choice and scholarly gentleman. I knew his heart was bleeding for his youngest brother, and I did not wish to make it bleed any more than necessary."¹⁵

Chappell's sermons reflect his boyhood days on the Tennessee farm. His love of the country is strong:

...I was brought up in a land of majestic hills and wonderful springs. There were many of these springs that were as abiding as the hills from which they flowed. Amidst the frosts of winter and the

¹⁴ Sermons on the Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), p. 34. (Cf. When the Church was Young, p. 54).

¹⁵ Anointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 33.

drouths of summer they sang with unabated life and gladness....¹⁶

On the farm they raised most of what they needed for daily living. "We raised our own corn for meal, our own wheat for flour. We had our own honey and molasses. When we wanted milk, we got personally acquainted with the cow."¹⁷

To illustrate a point in a sermon, he will often take his hearers back to the farm:

When I was a boy my father gave me a little colt. He gave me that colt the very day it was born. At once I took an interest in it. At once I began to pet it. It was not very long till I had a bridle on it. A few more months passed and I put a saddle on it. Later still I began to lean my weight upon it. At last when it was strong enough, and I was brave enough, I actually climbed on its back. And would you believe it? It never pawed and it never kicked me and it never bit me. And I doubt if it ever knew the day or the hour when it was "broke."

Now there was another colt about the same age of mine, but he was nobody's pet. He had no particular attention, but when he was three years of age Father said that it was time to break him. In other words, it was time for him to be converted into a work horse.

So after much trouble we managed to get him into a stable. After still more trouble we got a bridle on him. Then we managed to get him saddled. But the back of that colt went up like the apex of an isosceles triangle. The man that was on his back erased himself. At last, however, the task of breaking was accomplished. I suppose the colt never forgot the ordeal. But I submit to you that my colt was just as fully broken as this.¹⁸

¹⁶ Sermons From The Psalms (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), p. 96.

¹⁷ Living Zestfully (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 41.

¹⁸ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 70. (Cf. Anointed to Preach, p. 20).

Young Chappell's affection for animals was strong.

...When I was a boy on the farm I owned a faithful dog named Jack. Jack and I were the best and most intimate of friends. I have never loved any other dog as I loved him. Many a meal have I shared with him. I would give him of my bread and meat ungrudgingly. At times I would even give him a bit of cake, if I could spare it. Having eaten together, we often went together and drank out of the same gurgling spring....¹⁹

Like every other normal lad he was not above an occasional boyish prank:

Years ago, down on the farm, my brother and I were milking. Two yearlings stood by. We wrapped their tails together to see which could outpull the other. Instead of recognizing their common bond and acting accordingly, they began frantically to draw apart. The result was the maiming of one; its tail was pulled off.

My brother and I drove the unfortunate beast into the hills and fed it there. One day it came home. Father looked it over and remarked that it had accidentally hung its tail on a bush or stump and pulled it off. But my brother and I knew better....²⁰

But life on the farm was not easy. It had its heavy chores. Clovis had to milk the cows, strain the milk and carry it to the springhouse.

Some of the most dready, most humiliating moments of my life were spent with one of my mother's aprons tied, not around my waist, but

¹⁹ The Sermon on the Mount (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1930), p. 51.

²⁰ Living Zeatfully (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 85.

around my neck, to protect my clothes, while I enjoyed the thrill of operating a churndash.²¹

Illustrations like these suggest the kind of life young Clovis lived and they account in no small measure for much of the coloring of our preacher's sermonic output.

Education. The elder Chappells tried to give their children the best education they could afford. Clovis did not at first take to school. He was more interested in animals than in books. An incident happened, however, that proved to be a turning point in his early training:

I well remember a turning point in my own life. It was the first time that I ever hungered to know. As a lad I was the despair of the family. At the age of twelve I could not read with any degree of decency. I not only did not know, but what was far worse, I did not care to know. Then one day I was made to think. It came about in this fashion. A beautiful little girl, slightly younger than myself, came to our home for a visit. She was a great reader, but she knew nothing of the country. I was skillful with the horses as well as with the calves. I was an excellent rider, and in her eyes I became a hero over night. Really, I have never been quite so great either before or since. But it was too good to last. One morning I went into her room to find her ill. She called to me and said: "I am ill this morning. I want you to read me a story out of one of these books." I felt flattered. No one had ever asked me to read before. They knew better. But my pleasure was short-lived. I could not read her story. But I thought there might be a "getting out" place. So I said: "I can't read this. I read in the fourth reader." "Get me that," was the reply. I went for

²¹ Christ and the New Woman (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928), p. 34. (Cf. Sermons on Old Testament Characters, p. 140).

the book and, to my sorrow, found it. I then came back a bit like a galley slave at night, scourged to his dungeon. She found a story that she desired to hear, but again I failed. Then, in her surprise she laughed at me a little. But what stung far more, I saw pity in her eyes. She was actually sorry for her one-time hero. Then she said: "You ought to be in the first reader." And you know what I said to her? I said nothing. But what I said to myself was: "Some day I am going to know as much as you."²²

From attending public school Chappell went on to the Webb School²³ at Bell Buckle, Tennessee, an outstanding preparatory school, especially renowned for its emphasis upon Latin and Greek. Clovis liked the school and made much progress there. He writes appreciatively of its headmaster:

...It was my privilege as a youth to attend the famous Webb School at Bell Buckle, Tennessee. I owe to "Old Sawney" as his boys affectionately called the headmaster of this school, an unpayable debt. I had not been long at Bell Buckle before Old Sawney took time to take me alone for a personal conference. He talked to me about his hopes for me and about my own possibilities. He had the reputation of being rigid in his discipline, as he was. But I was braced and heartened to face it by the assurance that he was interested in me personally. There were times when I had to lean my shoulders hard against this conviction.²⁴

²² Sermons From the Psalms (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), pp. 71-72. (CF. Questions Jesus Asked, pp. 108, 109).

²³ Who's Who in America (Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Company, 1950), Vol. 28, 1950-51, p. 469.

²⁴ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 40.

On one occasion Mr. Webb told his students of a visit he had made in a carriage to the top of Pike's Peak. On the side of the carriage were the words, "Pike's Peak or bust." Chappell never forgot those words. Later when he and his brother visited Colorado, they determined to climb Pike's Peak, keeping all the while in mind the motto: "Pike's Peak or bust". They found that the undertaking was far more difficult than they had expected. But when one dropped behind, the other would repeat, "Pike's Peak or bust". In this way they encouraged themselves till the summit was reached.²⁵ This tenacity was to become characteristic of Chappell. He was not to give up easily.

After the Webb School Chappell attended for one year (1902-03) Trinity College at Durham, North Carolina, later to become Duke University. He also spent a year at Harvard University (1904-05).

Not the least valuable part of his education was acquired outside the school room. For, in these earliest days, like many another youth struggling for an education, Clovis knew something of the bitterness of poverty. From a passage such as this, one learns of the economic struggle

²⁴ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 40.

²⁵ Familiar Failures (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), pp. 77, 78.

under which he at times labored:

...Years ago, while quite a young chap, I went broke in a strange city. I did not have a penny. For a day I walked the streets hungry. I was in genuine need. But though I met hundreds of people, I asked none of them for help. This was the case, not because I needed nothing, but because all of them were strangers, and I feared that they would not care enough to help. Thus I bore my burden of poverty and hunger alone....²⁶

Mention should be made of yet another significant factor in the schooling of this outstanding preacher: the few years he spent as a country school teacher both in the Tennessee backwoods and in a small Tennessee town. Several times in his sermons Dr. Chappell draws upon the rich experiences of his teaching days.²⁷

It was during his teaching days that young Chappell met Cecil Hart, the girl who was to be his beloved companion for more than forty years. Let Dr. Chappell tell of this experience:

...So many of our finest opportunities come to us unsought and unexpected. For instance, years ago when I was just out of college, I took up my residence in a village in the heart of the hills of Tennessee. I did not go to this village in

²⁶ Sermons on the Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), pp. 30, 31.

²⁷ Instances: If I Were Young, p. 66; Sermons From the Psalms, pp. 130, 197; Questions Jesus Asked, p. 73; Faces About the Cross, p. 154; Sermons from the Miracles, p. 105.

search of romance. I went to teach school. But among my students was a girl, sweet with the loveliness of sixteen summers. My salary that year was paid in full. I think I gave at least an earnest account of myself as a teacher. But by far the finest result of that year's work was the winning of the girl who has been my wife through nearly forty lovely years.²⁸

Two sons came of the marriage, Clovis Junior and Robert. Dr. Chappell was later to dedicate one of his books to these sons, "whose unfailing loyalty has helped me preach without apology and without embarrassment."²⁹

Conversion. Chappell does not say much about his conversion in the sermons. He merely states it as a fact without mentioning the time or circumstances: "Speaking out of my own personal experience, the most difficult surrenders that I have had to make were not those that I made at the time of my conversion."³⁰ But there can be no doubt that this experience was the foundation of his entire ministry. It was, one feels certain, the inspiration of the personal invitations to discipleship which Dr. Chappell sometimes gives in the

²⁸ When The Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), pp. 41, 42.

²⁹ Ten Rules For Living (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1938), p. 5.

³⁰ Sermons On The Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), p. 217.

conclusion of a sermon.

Ministerial career. Clovis Chappell had an unfortunate start in his ministry. He writes of it as follows:

Almost immediately after I had been licensed to preach, I went to supply a circuit in a western state. This circuit had fallen upon evil days. The pastor had had to quit under a black cloud. A local preacher who belonged to the circuit had been on a drunk and in the thrill of his drunkenness had whipped his wife....

When I reached the station, there was no brass band to meet me. But though I was a bit cast down, I was not utterly destroyed. I had three sermons that I had preached among the home folks. They had pronounced them good. They had even declared that I would be a bishop some day. Therefore I consoled myself by saying, "When Sunday comes, I am going to preach the best of these three sermons. Then their eyes will be opened, and they will take me to their hearts."

But when Sunday came and I preached that best sermon, if anybody thought that I was going to be bishop, he kept it a profound secret. The former pastor invited me to his home for dinner. I went, but as soon as we entered his home, he disappeared. There was a large family, but not a single member was in sight. By and by the oldest daughter invited me in to dinner. I ate absolutely alone. I was not very hungry. Therefore, when I had finished my dinner and had looked about once more for some member of the family, and had failed to find a single one, I took my departure. I set out at random, came to the railroad, and started west...I think that Sunday afternoon was the bitterest that has ever passed over my head.³¹

Chappell's discouragement at this time was not altogether due to this initial experience. He had never felt quite certain of his calling:

³¹ Anointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 26, 27. (Cf. Sermons on Old Testament Characters, p. 143).

What was the matter? It was not simply that my situation was hard and disappointing. I could have faced that with some degree of courage. My Gethsemane was born of the uncertainty of my call. I began talking to myself after this fashion. "You were doing some good in the work that you have thrown down. But you can do nothing here. You are not a hero; you have run without being sent. God has not called you. You are only a fool." A few days later, then there came a long-distance telephone call offering me a very desirable position in the field of education in my home state, I at once resigned. As I turned my face home again there was one thing that I repeated to myself over and over. It was this: "Whatever else you may do tomorrow, there is one thing that you certainly will not do. Never again will you enter a pulpit to preach."³²

The young preacher was not to venture forth preaching again until he had examined his credentials.³³ One gathers from Chappell's later writings that he became fully reassured of his call. For one thing, he knew that the influence of his childhood home had prepared him for the ministry:

...God's favorite way of speaking to us is through the voice of consecrated parents. There are many reared in such homes who have known from their childhood that they were destined for the work of the ministry.

While this was not my case, yet it is true that my first wistful look at the ministry came through the influence of my father and mother. I was drawn toward this high calling both by the training they gave me and by what they were in themselves. I was influenced further by the honor that they showed the minister who was a

³² Ibid., p. 28., (Cf., When the Church was Young, p. 157).

³³ Ibid., pp. 11, 12.

frequent visitor in our home. Early it came into my boyish heart to say, "I should like to be the kind of man that my father and mother could honor as they honor our minister." Therefore I looked longingly at the ministry from boyhood. But in spite of this longing, in spite of the fact that there were times when I felt whatever other vocation I might enter, I would never feel that I had arrived unless I entered the ministry, this longing was not strong enough. Therefore, I decided upon another vocation.³⁴

Of the immediate circumstance that was to settle the problem of vocation, he writes as follows:

My final decision to become a minister was brought about through a wise layman. This man was superintendent of the Sunday school in the town where I was then teaching. He took time to talk to me about entering the ministry. When I told him that I was not averse to this vocation, that I had turned from it only because I felt it was too high for me, he gave me encouragement. Above all else he set me a task. He asked me to give a resume of the lesson each Sunday morning to the entire school. It was as I preached these ten minute sermons that I plucked up the courage to believe that God might use me in the vocation that had always been my first choice. Thus God often calls through human voices.³⁵

But it was Chappell's subsequent experience as a preacher that allayed any lingering doubt concerning his calling:

Yet be it said to the praise of my patient Lord, here I am with more than forty years of joyous ministry behind me. These have been faulty years,

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 23, 24.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

but they have been in the main years of gladsome certainty. I have so loved my vocation that it has been without a rival. While I honor other callings, they have been as starlight to sunlight in comparison with preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. Therefore, if I had my life to live over again, and if God were again to honor me with his call, I should say today with greater eagerness than I did yesterday, "Here am I; send me."³⁶

After a lapse of two years, during which time he taught school again, Chappell was fully delivered from the depression of his western experience and returned to the ministry.³⁷ He started in small charges, but before long his ability was recognized. The Central Texas Annual Conference received him into full connection in 1912.³⁸ While still a young minister he was appointed to a university church.³⁹ But a large part of his ministry was to be spent in downtown city churches. He writes, "I think I served this type of church longer than any other minister in American Methodism."⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 28, 29.

³⁷ When the Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 157.

³⁸ Who's Who in Methodism (Chicago: Th.A.N. Marquis Company, 1952), 1st edition, p. 128.

³⁹ Appointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 33.

⁴⁰ In letter from Dr. Chappell to the writer of this thesis.

During his forty years ministry Chappell served the following churches:⁴¹ Polytechnic, Texas; Gatesville, Texas; Epworth Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Highland Park Church, Dallas, Texas; Mount Vernon Place Church, Washington, D. C.; Galloway Memorial Church, Jackson, Mississippi; and First Methodist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina.

In Washington, D. C. his sermons attracted not only the citizens but also the members of Congress. At Galloway Memorial Church he succeeded some of the greatest speakers of America, such as Edward W. Carmack and Henry Ward Beecher.⁴²

While Chappell emphasized the preaching function of his ministry, he did not neglect visiting his people. His sermons frequently reflect this pastoral interest, as in the following instance:

One time I went to visit an old grandmother who was slowly slipping into the silence. When I arrived, the daughter at whose home she lived met me at the door and said, "We are glad you have come, but Mother won't know you. She hasn't recognized any of us all day. But I'd be glad if you would go in and sit at her bedside a moment. I know she would desire it if she were conscious."

⁴¹ Who's Who in America, p. 469 and letter from Dr. Chappell to the writer of this thesis.

⁴² "Ministerial Career of Dr. Clovis Chappell Reviewed," The Charlotte Observer, October 16, 1949.

Therefore I went in and sat beside her and watched her as she swung like a pendulum between life and death. Then it came into my mind to make an experiment. So I put my lips close to her ear and said, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." And as I spoke those deathless words, the thin lips smiled a little, and the head nodded a wee bit. Thus when she could no longer recognize the voice of her own child, she could still recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd...⁴³

His ministry was not without obstacles. Sometimes it was the problem of his own personality:

...As a young minister, I was tremendously timid. I have gone to make calls when I dared not go in. I was afraid that I would have nothing to say when I got in....⁴⁴

And again:

...There are those who make light of timidity. This is especially true of those who have never known its tortures. Personally, I know a little how to sympathize with Timothy. I have been gripped by utter terror at the very thought of appearing in public. I have had my knees shake so on such an occasion that I have seen some in the audience nudge each other and call attention to my trembling....⁴⁵

Like his fellow ministers, he sometimes received appointments he did not like. "Some of the churches that I have

⁴³ Anointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 78.

⁴⁴ Living Zealously (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 123.

⁴⁵ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 81.

served I would never have served had it been left to my own choice."⁴⁶ Sometimes he staggered at the prospect of going to a problem parish:

When I was quite a young preacher, I was transferred to a certain conference to become a pastor of a desirable city church. Arrived at the seat of the conference, I heard much talk about the desperate plight of the church at B. The pastor of the church had gone wrong, and had had to quit the ministry and membership of the church. As a result the congregation, taking sides for and against, was torn into fragments. Everywhere I turned I heard the preachers saying one to another, "I certainly pity the man who goes to B. May the Lord help him!" I listened to it all with considerable indifference. At least I had no personal interest. I was sure that I already knew where I was going. When the hour came for the bishop to read the appointments I calmly sat down to find out where all the other brethren were going. But in less than five minutes, I had been read out, not to my city church, but to the church at B. I was absolutely stunned....⁴⁷

Early in his ministry he came to a church which did not want him. His handling of the situation is interesting:

...The church to which I went did not want me. The pastor whom I followed was exceedingly popular. They felt that in loyalty to him they must be disloyal to me. Therefore the people came day after day saying, "So-and-so is going to quit the church." And I would say, "Why?" And they would say, "Because Brother So-and-so has gone and you can not carry on the work....And they kept that up almost every day for about six weeks. And then one Sunday morning I said, "I am ready this morning to write the letter of every man and woman who wants to leave. I have

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁷ Sermons From Revelation (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 89, 90.

learned something this week. I saw a man buy a bottle of soda pop. He knocked in the cork and it began to splutter and bubble till I thought he would lose it all. But he waited and when the spluttering was over I saw nothing had escaped but bubbles and wind. "Now," I said, "you bubbles and wind that have been talking about leaving all the while, go ahead. We can get along nicely without you." And nobody left.⁴⁸

Chappell was later to record, "...I realize now that every one of these made a definite contribution to me personally..."⁴⁹

Theological beliefs. The Bible is the center of Dr. Chappell's life and ministry. His sermons breathe much of the spirit of the Bible; they abound in Biblical quotations and illustrations.⁵⁰ He believes in the divine inspiration of the Word. His attitude at this point reminds the writer of the view held by Lutheran fundamentalists in the Scandinavian countries. Chappel says:

...Naturally I am not claiming that the Old Testament is equal to the New, nor am I urging that you believe every word of it "from cover to cover." If you take that position, you are a far better believer than Jesus. Some of the Old Testament He rejected. Some of it He corrected.

⁴⁸ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins., 1921), pp. 42, 43.

⁴⁹ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 28.

⁵⁰ For more specific information at this point, see this thesis pp. 54-57.

Some of it he used. Some of it he found the very bread of life to his soul. Some of it he used as the sword of the Spirit with which he fought his battles against the tempter....⁵¹

Elsewhere on this theme he writes:

[God did not dictate] to the prophets as one would dictate to a stenographer. Their messages are both human and divine. We speak of a bee's gathering honey, but in so speaking we are not true to the facts. All the flowers in all the world have not a single drop of honey. These flowers have a kind of nectar that the bees gather. Having gathered it, they put some part of themselves into it and lo, the miracle of honey. The prophets listened to God; but, having listened, they put something of themselves into what they heard, and we have the miracle of their messages.⁵²

He does not over-emphasize special doctrines. He has no "hobby horse". As an evangelical preacher he makes central personal salvation through Christ, the Son of God,⁵³ and the Son of man.⁵⁴

He stresses the necessity of being born again:

Now just as one may be born from beneath, even so he may be born from above. This new birth is a necessity if one is to see the Kingdom of God. A spiritual birth is just as necessary in order to

⁵¹ Anointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 74.

⁵² And The Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 16.

⁵³ Living Zestfully (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), pp. 213-15.

⁵⁴ Sermons From the Psalms (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), p. 52.

enter the Kingdom of Heaven as a physical birth in order to enter this world. Therefore no amount of culture, no amount of decency, no amount of devotion, no amount of morality, nothing can take the place of the new birth. It is our greatest privilege. But it is far more than a privilege; it is an absolute necessity.⁵⁵

The ground of forgiveness is the blood of Jesus:

...There are no stains that He cannot wash away. However dark may be some of the pages that you have written into your life's story, remember this: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin"....⁵⁶

From one of his latest books the following sentence is quoted, "We cannot, I say, get away from this phrase, 'which he hath purchased with his own blood,' without destroying the New Testament."⁵⁷

He believes not only in a personal God but also in a personal devil.

I know that this is not exactly the faith of the modern world. But the Bible very clearly teaches the reality of a personal God. It also just as clearly teaches the reality of a personal agency of evil....⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 151.

⁵⁶ Sermons on Old Testament Characters (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1925, sec. ed., 1931), p. 54.

⁵⁷ When the Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 179, (Cf. Questions Jesus Asked, p. 138; Sermons on New Testament Characters, pp. 98, 99; The Road to Certainty, pp. 179, 180).

⁵⁸ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 110.

He speaks freely of judgment and hell.⁵⁹ "In the after life you are going to remember. Memory is going to be a power that will help to intensify the joys of heaven. It will also help to embitter the pangs of hell."⁶⁰

How does this contemporary Methodist minister view the Christian's relationship to the social life of our time? Chappell is a preacher of social righteousness.⁶¹ In his courageous opposition to swearing, keeping the Sabbath, dancing, and the liquor traffic he is at one with the old-time Methodist preachers. The writer found at least thirty sermon references to the liquor problem⁶² from his books mentioned in the bibliography. Chappell also deals at times with the movies, modern sports, cards, tobacco,

⁵⁹ Instances: When the Church Was Young, pp. 164-173; The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 224-25; Sermons From Revelation, pp. 213-14; Sermons on Old Testament Characters, pp. 42-43; Faces About the Cross, pp. 103, 188).

⁶⁰ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 102.

⁶¹ Instances: And The Prophets, pp. 49, 71-73, 110-12; Ten Rules For Living, pp. 91, 92, 117, 148-49, 162-64.

⁶² Instances: Sermons on Old Testament Characters, pp. 107, 152; Living Zestfully, p. 161; Faces About the Cross, pp. 145, 182, 200; The Road to Certainty, pp. 43, 55, 94, 113, 168.

gambling, and sex questions.⁶³ Occasionally he treats of the problem of peace among nations.⁶⁴ But, except for a reference or two to Communism,⁶⁵ he does not introduce political philosophies into his preaching. He is apt to deal with racial and labor problems.⁶⁶ He believes in the sanctification of the daily Christian life, and teaches the possibility of the Christian's living a victorious life.⁶⁷ In at least one sermon he explains his view of sanctification:

What, then, is it to be sanctified? It is to be consecrated. It is to be fully surrendered to the will of God. It is to seek first, always and everywhere, the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.

...

Now, it is thus that we are to be consecrated to God. Our pleasures and our pastimes are to have as their goal that we may serve him the better. Our business is not to be an end in itself, but a means to an end...To be sanctified, to be consecrated, is

⁶³ Instances: Ten Rules For Living, pp. 89, 101, 112; Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, p. 122; Familiar Failures, p. 53; If I Were Young, p. 211; Living Zestfully, pp. 70, 165.

⁶⁴ Instances: The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 46, 90; Ten Rules for Living, p. 94; and Sermons on The Lord's Prayer, p. 41.

⁶⁵ Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 58; When The Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 137.

⁶⁶ And The Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), pp. 111, 113, 148, 188.

⁶⁷ Sermons on the Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), pp. 124, 127.

to bring every word and thought and deed, every decision, up before this high test, "Will it please God?"⁶⁸

Reasons for success. Whatever success he attained as a preacher, Dr. Chappell attributed it in large part to three rules of his life. For one thing he believed firmly that the preacher had to keep his body sound and strong. He would urge young ministers to take a day of rest every week as well as a vacation every year.⁶⁹ He himself learned this lesson the hard way; for it was because of overwork that his own health broke down in his early ministry:

This experience has been worth to me far more than gold. Since then, now nearly forty years ago, in this matter of resting I have not consulted with flesh and blood. You will perhaps find in some churches a very few people who do not think the preacher needs a vacation. But do not let these misguided folks impair your ministry. I learned fairly early that in some matters it was better to announce to official boards rather than to consult with them. In regard to my vacation I made it a rule to announce. I simply said, "I am starting my vacation tomorrow and will be back at a certain date." I began quite early to take a month of each year. As I have grown older, I have taken two months. This has enabled me in some measure to keep fit during a ministry given almost wholly to downtown churches.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 210-11.

⁶⁹ Anointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 111-12.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 114.

But whatever eminence he attained in the pulpit, Chappell's cultivation of his own devotional life also played a large part:

...We must look well to our own private devotions. I find that nothing helps me to pray quite so much as the reading of the Word of God. Sometimes when I come to the hour for my own private devotions, I am utterly dead and listless. But as I turn to the Word of God, often the fires are kindled. Take for instance a passage like this: "Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me." When I get that far, I cannot help but long for such courage. Realizing my need, I instinctively turn my eyes and my heart toward God.⁷¹

Because Chappell held preaching in great regard he devoted much time to sermon preparation. His giving of self unstintedly in this regard, constitutes a third reason for his eminence in the pulpit. "Therefore I have made it a rule to give myself plenty of time. I begin early. If there is any resting to be done, I do it at the end of the week rather than at the beginning."⁷² And again:

Perhaps the first thought that grips the conscientious minister when he wakes on Monday morning is this: Sunday will soon be here. It will come whether I am prepared or unprepared. It will come whether I am energetic or lazy. When it comes, scores, perhaps hundreds, of busy and hard-

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 116. (Cf. The Village Tragedy, p. 29).

⁷² Ibid., p. 44. (Cf. Ibid., pp. 30-31, 52-53).

pressed people are going to come to the house of God to worship, and to be helped or hindered in their worship by hearing me preach. For this reason I ought to have something to say that is vital and worthwhile. That this may be the case, I ought to study to show myself a sound workman without cause to feel ashamed.⁷³

His habit was to write his sermons, although he did not memorize them. Upon writing a sermon he would lay it aside and perhaps not read it over again before he preached it. But so saturated was he with his message that he always delivered it without notes.⁷⁴ He regarded the delivery of his sermon as his finest hour.⁷⁵

Publications. Dr. Chappell has proved to be a prolific writer.⁷⁶ His Christ And The New Woman is a series of lectures delivered at Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia. Anointed To Preach is the title of lectures on preaching given at the Candler School of Theology of Emory University. Of course by far the greater number of his publications are books of sermons. During the last war his writings reached England, where they were at once popular.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 86. (Cf. p. 82).

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

⁷⁶ See Appendix, "The Published Works of Clovis G. Chappell."

⁷⁷ Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), pp. 7, 8.

Honors and retirement. In 1920 Duke University bestowed the degree of doctor of divinity upon Clovis Chappell, in recognition of his achievement as a preacher. That same year he was the recipient of another honorary degree in divinity, this time from Century College of Louisiana. In 1936 Birmingham Southern College honored him the degree, doctor of literature.

When Dr. Chappell retired from the ministry in 1949, he did not join the ranks of the unemployed;⁷⁸ for since his retirement he has published a couple of books and preached approximately three hundred times a year.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ministerial Career of Dr. Clovis Chappell, Reviewed, The Charlotte Observer, October 16, 1949.

⁷⁹ Letter from Dr. Chappell to the writer of this thesis.

CHAPTER III

THE SERMONS

Preliminary. Dr. Chappell is in the Protestant tradition when he insists that the sermon is the most important part of the Protestant worship service:

Then I think we make a serious blunder when we draw a line between the so-called worship service and the sermon. When we go to church we go to public worship. Of course we are supposed to worship through our songs and prayers. But if the service has any wholeness about it, we ought also to worship through the sermon. In fact, the sermon ought to bring our worship to its climax....

This also I must add. Even when I have found the so-called worship service helpful, if the minister has followed with a shoddy, ill-prepared, and slovenly delivered sermon, much of the good ~~gained~~ gained has been dissipated. Therefore, I am fully convinced that there is nothing more important to a service of public worship than the right kind of preaching....It is highly significant that Jesus, who could have given himself to so many great tasks, gave his little handful of years to preaching.¹

Chappell has published in all about four hundred sermons. The number of sermons in a Chappell volume varies. His first book contains fourteen. Subsequent volumes are likely to contain from seven to nineteen sermons, the majority having sixteen. The average number

¹ And The Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), pp. 161-62.

of pages per sermon is eleven.

Sermon emphases. Dr. Chappell's aims are primarily evangelistic and pastoral. The gospel trumpet is sounded always and the shepherd's concern for the flock is ever present. The evangelistic purpose is much in evidence. Chappell is always seeking to cement Divine-human relationships. He writes, "Throughout the years of my ministry I have been an evangelistic pastor. It has been my joy to see thousands unite with the church."² Typical of Chappell's evangelistic preaching is the following excerpt:

This same Christ is knocking at the door of our church and at the door of our hearts. "Behold, I stand at the door." It is a present fact. "I am now standing at the door and knocking. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." If you here and now open the door of your heart, Christ will come in as host and guest and change your winter into spring. Not only so, but through you He may get his opportunity at the whole church, for in order for Christ to get into a church it is not necessary that every member open the door. If only one will open, He will get his chance. God grant that there may be a welcome for Him in all our hearts.³

² Living Zestfully (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 58.

³ Sermons From Revelation (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 148.

One cannot read far in the sermons until he recognizes the person of Christ overshadowing the whole. Several Chappell volumes deal exclusively with the life of Christ.⁴ The aspect of Christ most frequently portrayed is His Saviourhood.

But this preacher is also intensely interested in the life of contemporary man. His sermons are life-centered. They show a sympathetic understanding of human needs, even though they may seldom be unusual in insight into human nature. It is said of Dr. Chappell that he prepared each of his sermons in order to help his hearers over the hard places of life.⁵

Many of the sermons have a distinctly social emphases. Again and again Chappell proves to be a preacher of social righteousness, as in these instances:

...Let me ask this question: Who are the people that you like the least? They are the people you do not know. There still exists some bit of prejudice between the North and the South. But where is this prejudice strongest? Not on the border where the Northerner and the Southerner are brought into constant contact. It is strongest among those who know

⁴ Clovis G. Chappell, The Seven Words (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952); Sermons From the Miracles (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937); Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948).

⁵ Andrew Watterson Blackwood, Preaching In Time Of Reconstruction (New York: The Pulpit Press, 1945), p. 38.

nothing about each other. It is easy for a man who lives in Georgia to hate a man who lives in Boston. And it is easy for a man who lives in Boston to have a perfect contempt for the man who lives in Georgia. Their contempt is born of their ignorance....⁶

And again:

The particular sin of which many of these were guilty was the sin of unfaithfulness to the marriage relationship. "I was a witness," God said, "when you married in your youth." Whoever else was at the wedding ceremony, when you or I married, God was there. He heard the vows we made. He is interested that those vows be kept. Divorce had become very easy then, as it has today. "I hate divorce," God said then, as he says today. No amount of praying, no amount of giving, no amount of religious observance is of any worth toward our salvation unless we are willing to give up our sin.⁷

Sermon themes. Sometimes the title of a Chappell volume clearly makes known the scope of its contents. Such book-titles as Sermons On Old Testament Characters, Sermons On New Testament Characters, and The Seven Words are examples in point. The author has sixteen titles indicating specialized subject-matter contents.

Other book titles are taken from sermon topics within the books themselves.⁸ Still others use a title more or

⁶ Sermons On Old Testament Characters (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1925, sec. ed., 1931), p. 36.

⁷ And The Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 203.

⁸ Instances: The Village Tragedy, Values That Last, Living Zealously, and The Road to Certainty.

less suggestive of the contents of the book.⁹ The sermon topics are likely to attract attention, without being sensational.

Concerning the selection of the topic of the sermon Dr. Chappell says:

The first hurdle we have to take is the selection of a theme. This is not always easy. Sometimes the needs of our local situation will help us by suggesting some topic that is timely, if not timeless. Always we may have the help of the divine Spirit. But even then the choice for many of us is often difficult. In fact it is possible to spend so much time deciding on what to preach that by the time we have reached our decision, it is too late to prepare the sermon.¹⁰

The author's sermons show considerable variety of topics, touching on every major doctrine of the Bible. Dr. Chappell is not a hobbyist. The closest he comes to specialization is his fondness for the subjects, prayer and Bible biography.¹¹

As previously intimated he likes to organize a book around a series of related topics. He has, for instance, individual volumes of sermons dealing with certain books

⁹ Instances: Familiar Failures, Men That Count, If I Were Young, When The Church Was Young, and The Modern Dance.

¹⁰ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 71.

¹¹ Sermons On the Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934); Sermons On New Testament Characters (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1924, sec. ed., 1931).

of the Bible, such as the Psalms, the Revelation, and the Acts. He enjoys working on a series of sermons like the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount. Now and then, however, a book title indicates sermons not in a series. His reason for emphasizing sermons in series, he gives as follows:

...Preaching by series has many advantages. First, it has the very decided advantage of enabling the minister to know his destination when he wakes on Monday morning. It is marvelous how what we see, what we experience, what we read, will contribute to the preparation of our sermon if we know our theme far enough in advance. In fact, there is almost nothing that the preacher knows that cannot be made to pay tribute to his preaching, if he broods over his subject long enough.... Then preaching by series will save the minister from riding a hobby. It will save him from preaching only on those themes that are congenial and easy, while neglecting other themes that his congregation need to have discussed....¹²

He furnishes a word of warning in connection with series preaching. "Such series ought not to be too long. To announce as many as twenty subjects at once tends rather to swamp the interest of the prospective hearer. A series of five to ten is better."¹³

Most of the author's topics are very simple in statement. The book The Sermon On The Mount is suggestive

¹² Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 72, 73.

¹³ Ibid., p. 73.

of the topics generally used: "The Meek", "The Merciful", "The Peacemakers", "Salt", "Light", "Ask-Seek-Knock", "The Way Of Life", and "The Two Builders". What topics could be simpler than these in the author's, Questions Jesus Asked: "Bread", "Profit And Loss", "The Transforming Touch", and "Persistent Prayer"? An occasional volume may contain a rather striking sermon topic like: "The Distant Disciple",¹⁴ "The Man With An Alibi",¹⁵ and "The Unfinished Sermon".¹⁶ But curious topics are the exception.

Perhaps the closest Chappell comes to the sensational topic is in Sermons From Revelation where two sermons are entitled respectively, "The Church of Satan's Capitol" and "Jezebel's Church". Yet these topics are apt in the light of his usage of the text.

Chappell is sensitive to the particular need of the hour. The Sermon On The Mount was published in 1930 at a time when men were thinking much about the moral teachings of Christ. Sermons From Revelation appeared during the last war when there was interest more than usual in

¹⁴ Familiar Failures (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), p. 124.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁶ Values That Last (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 9.

eschatology.

In expressing a topic, Dr. Chappell does not hesitate to use a term that might be of peculiar interest to the particular group addressed. This he seems to be doing in Feminine Faces¹⁷ and If I Were Young.¹⁸ In the first book each sermon topic includes the word "face", as "The Frozen Face", "The Desperate Face". In the second book all topics use the expression "I'd", as in the sermon, "I'd Form Good Habits", a device no doubt designed to attract young people, to whom the sermons were preached.

A Chappell booktitle may at times reflect the courage of the preacher. Questionable social practices indulged in by church members he assaults in a volume that bears the title, The Modern Dance.

Sometimes a Chappell topic is quite ambiguous. "Then What?" and "Absent Witnesses" and a few other themes previously mentioned in other connections, seem fragmentary.¹⁹ But such instances are the exception.

¹⁷ Feminine Faces (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942).

¹⁸ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945).

¹⁹ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 23; Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 154.

Sermon types. Dr. Chappell is both a topical and a textual preacher. Many of his divisional topics stem from his text; many from his subject. He is never a topical preacher in the sense that his messages are divorced from Biblical text and context. He is not strictly speaking an expository preacher; for he is not likely to address himself intensively to explanation of Bible passages.

Text and context. Chappell invariably begins his sermons with a text. In Anointed To Preach, he writes:

Whether preaching by series or not, I always use a text. Probably I began to employ this method because it was in vogue when I entered the ministry. I have continued to use it through the years because of a very profound conviction that Bible-centered preaching is at once the most helpful and the least taxing....²⁰

As previously stated, this preacher would first find his theme or topic, then an appropriate text, a procedure no doubt reversed by most men using texts.

How do I go about finding a text? There was a time when I said to myself, "Go to, I must preach next Sunday. Therefore I must find a text." But so far as I can remember I never once found a text when I was searching for one. I have found it only as a by-product. Through many years it has been my custom to read devotionally each morning a lesson from the Bible, generally both from the Old and from the New Testament. In

²⁰ Anointed to Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 76.

so reading I try to forget that I am a minister and to remember only that I am a needy soul dependent upon God for the water of life and for the bread of life. As I thus read the Word for myself, when I come to a passage that speaks home to my own heart, then I take courage to believe that this same passage might speak helpfully to my people.²¹

An examination of the preacher's selection of texts shows that on the whole he was able to accommodate his topic with a suitable text. His practice of "text-inlaying" seems surprisingly successful generally. Yet a few texts do not show close correlation with their topics, a weakness that must inevitably appear occasionally in the sermonic output of any man writing as much as Chappell, and using his method of textual accommodation. Examples of this discrepancy are found in If I Were Young, where dubious usage is made of I Kings 20:40 and I Samuel 30:6.²²

How does Chappell in the study approach his text? He reads and rereads the text and context several times.²³ This writer finds no evidence of his using the original

²¹ Anointed To Preach, (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 77.

²² If I Were Young (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1948), pp. 21, 66.

²³ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 78; Sermons From The Miracles (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), p. 11.

languages of the Bible. Dr. Chappell states in a letter to the writer that he used his Greek in his early ministry, but that when the new translations came, he went to them. Even at that, it seems unusual that this outstanding preacher did not continue to make some use of his Greek New Testament.

In his pulpit work he quotes most frequently from the King James' translation. But on occasion he quotes from other translations: Moffatt, Smith-Goodspeed, Weymouth, the American Standard Version, and the Revised Standard Version. The writer found a ratio of 3:1 in favor of the King James' version.

Most of Chappell's texts are short and striking, limited to one verse or a part of a verse. Two hundred and twenty-five of his texts were examined for length. One hundred and ninety-five had only one verse or a part of a verse. Seventeen texts had two verses, seven had three verses, and only six had more than three verses.

On the whole Chappell's texts may be said to be familiar and pivotal. Seven of his books, containing one hundred and sixteen sermons, use eighty-one familiar texts, twenty-three unfamiliar texts, and fourteen texts that this writer would call fairly well known. In other words, about two-thirds are typical central texts. Some of his books of sermons use central texts exclusively. This is so in

Sermons On New Testament Characters and in The Seven Words.

His volume Familiar Failures has seventeen texts, six of which in this writer's opinion are obscure. The fact that a considerable majority of the texts are well known indicates that this preacher takes up the bigger themes to preach on.

In twenty books, containing three hundred and two texts, ninety-eight are from the Old Testament and two hundred and four are from the New Testament; or about one third of the texts are from the Old Testament, and two thirds are from the New Testament. Chappell rarely uses a double text (i.e., two texts from different passages of Scripture). Occasionally he uses for his text one he has formerly used with another sermon content. Examination of some three hundred sermons reveals ten instances of his duplicating a text in this way.

As a rule Dr. Chappell in building his sermon makes significant use of his context as well as of his text:

...When I have decided upon a text, I read and reread the text and the context. This I do over and over again. As I thus read, I seek to open every door of my mind and heart to both text and context. I listen not only to what the passage says directly, but to what it suggests....²⁴

²⁴ Anciented To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 78-79.

Sometimes he sees fit to use a text independent of its context, but never at the sacrifice of violating the context. In Ten Rules For Living and in The Sermon On The Mount his use of a text is not generally accompanied by context.

Structure. Dr. Chappell believes that the organization of the material of a sermon is of supreme importance. He calls for "a simple, logical, and concise outline."²⁵ In this connection he writes:

... In my opinion an outline is more than a luxury; it is an absolute necessity. It is possible to have a jellyfish without any skeleton, but we cannot have a man without a skeleton. No more can we have a sermon without a skeleton. Of course it is not always necessary to tell how many parts there are to the sermon. It is not always necessary to let people see the wheels go round. But it is necessary that we have an outline. If we do not, neither we nor our people can possibly remember what we say. We have all heard pleasing sermons that left us with no abiding treasure.²⁶

Notwithstanding Chappell's insistence on outline, he does not in the writer's opinion always employ a formal introduction as such. In this he seems less exacting than Broadus, who states:

It can scarcely be necessary to argue at length to the effect that sermons ought generally to have

²⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 81, 82.

an introduction. Men have a natural aversion to abruptness and delight in a somewhat gradual approach.²⁷

The writer after examining three hundred Chappell messages concluded that about thirty per cent of them did not have a formal introduction. The preacher starts these sermons with the first main division of the sermon proper. Sometimes this first division begins informally with an introductory word or two, although such may not be set apart from the first division of the message proper. In some books each sermon has an introduction as such, as in Questions Jesus Asked and Sermons From Revelation. In other books most of the sermons have no formal introduction, as in Sermon On New Testament Characters where only four of sixteen sermons have an introduction. No doubt the preacher feels at times the superfluousness of formal introduction.

As an example of the wide latitude Dr. Chappell allows himself respecting the introduction, the first

²⁷ John A. Broadus, On The Preparation and Delivery Of Sermons, New and Revised Edition by Jesse Burton Weatherspoon (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), p. 101.

division of the sermon entitled, "The Climax,"²⁸ says something about the nature of the subject to be discussed and presents an apology for the text. A second main division introduces background material. One feels that sermon structure here could be greatly improved if both divisions were united into an introductory section.

Most of his formally arranged introductions prepare the congregation for a sympathetic understanding of the sermon. Always interesting, they do not, however, reach a pitch that the preacher is unable to sustain in the message proper. Chappell refuses to use sensational materials merely to get attention. Sometimes he begins with one or two short harmonious illustrations.²⁹ Again he is likely to start with a Bible quotation or two.³⁰

Most of his introductions are not unduly long. Of the large number examined by the writer, approximately two-thirds are shorter than one printed page. This is relatively brief when it is remembered that the average Chappell sermon is eleven pages long. Some of this large number have

²⁸ The Road To Certainty (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1940), p. 174.

²⁹ Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1948), pp. 11, 82, 93, 114, 163.

³⁰ Living Zestfully (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1944), pp. 9, 23, 90, 117.

for introduction only a few lines.³¹ About twenty per cent are from one to two pages long;³² ten per cent are two pages or more in length.³³ The longest introduction (five and a half pages) is in the sermon, "Pray as sons".³⁴

Turning now to the matter of formal sermon divisions, it is to be observed that Chappell's messages are always outlined.³⁵ He likes variety in the number of divisions employed, and refuses to be restricted to three main ones.³⁶ He seems to prefer many divisions to few. In an investigation of two hundred and thirty sermons, only seven show two main divisions; seventy-nine have four, fourteen have five, and three have six divisions. One hundred and twenty-nine sermons (fifty-five per cent) have three divisions.

He likes a simple question-and-answer method of developing a sermon, as in a sermon on the book of Revelation

³¹ Ibid., pp. 76, 104, 117, 130, 144, 158.

³² Ibid., pp. 9, 23.

³³ Sermons From the Miracles (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), p. 80; Questions Jesus Asked (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 81.

³⁴ Sermons On The Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), p. 25.

³⁵ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 81-85.

³⁶ When The Church Was Young (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 35.

in which he divides his message thus: "(I). Why is this book so little read and so often misread? (II). What was the purpose of this book? (III). How did he seek to accomplish this purpose?"³⁷

Chappell sometimes uses a modification of an older style of preaching, one peculiar to Calvin and his more immediate followers. These early reformers looked askance at homiletical methods which tried to make a sermon impressive; they used in the extreme the simple method of explaining a passage of Scripture verse by verse and word by word. Dr. Chappell is always happy when the sequence of thoughts in a scripture passage tends itself naturally to homiletical treatment. The Sermons From The Psalms furnish many examples of this kind of treatment.

The number of subdivisions in the Chappell sermons varies considerably. Often a sermon has no subdivision, especially where the main divisions are short;³⁸ again there are many instances of multiplication of

³⁷ Sermons From Revelation (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 9-21.

³⁸ See, Sermons On The Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), p. 74; and Sermons on Old Testament Characters (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1925, sec. ed. 1931), pp. 23, 27-28, 29, 45, 60, 69.

subdivisions within a sermon.³⁹

Although the outline of the body of a message is generally sound homiletically, occasionally one is faulty. A questionable outline is the one in the sermon entitled, "Pray as sons."⁴⁰ The introduction to this message constitutes half of the sermon. Then follows two main divisions, the second one, "Now since God is our Father, we are to take the position of sons," is treated more like a closing application. In reality there seems to be only one main division to the message in question.

A more typical Chappell outline shows good balance, as does the following one on the Pharisee and the Publican:

- I. A contrast between the two men who went to pray:
 1. One was at the top of the ladder in church and state.
 2. The other was at the bottom.
- II. A contrast in their prayers:
 1. One prayed with a good eye on himself, a bad eye on his brother, with no eye for the Lord at all.
 2. The other looked to God alone.

³⁹ For examples of five subdivisions, see Feminine Faces, pp. 30-35, 155-60, 187-193; and, Sermons From Revelation, pp. 15-21, 61-65, 100-102. For four subdivisions, see Ibid., pp. 76-83; and Sermons On The Lord's Prayer, pp. 59-62, and 69-74.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 25-37.

III. A contrast in the results:

1. One went as he came, hard and cold.
2. The other went down remade.⁴¹

That outlining was not easy for Dr. Chappell, as it is not for most men, is evidenced by the fact that he confesses that he arrived at the Pharisee and publican outline only after having worked out about fifty different outlines.⁴²

Not all of his outlines are as brief as the one based on the text beginning, "I know whom I have believed" (II Tim. 1:12):

- I. I believed.
- II. I committed.
- III. I know.⁴³

In the opinion of this writer, the book, Sermons From Revelation seems to possess superior outlines to those of any of the other books of sermons by the author.

While most of Dr. Chappell's outlines are logical, they are not always parallel in form of expression. Looseness in this regard is obvious in the divisions stemming from the topic, "Critics and criticism":

⁴¹ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 84.

⁴² Loc. cit.

⁴³ Loc. cit.

- I. Conspicuous among the faces about the cross is that of the critic.
- II. Since all of us criticize how can we make our criticism Christian?
- III. But if it is important that we learn to criticize aright, it is no less important that we learn how to take criticism.⁴⁴

Treatment of the main divisions in a given sermon is not always symmetrical. In the same sermon one division may be quite long; another may be very short, even though the nature of the division seems to call for longer treatment. One wonders if at times divisional length did not sometimes depend upon the material the preacher had at his disposal at the moment.

The average divisional length of the sermons is approximately two to three pages. Chappell is unlike Fosdick who, apparently working on the principle that audience interest is strongest at the beginning of a message, makes his first division the longest, and his last the shortest. Chappell does not seem to portion his divisions to accommodate audience psychology. His first point is not always his longest, his second is not usually shorter than the first, nor his last the shortest of all. Often his

⁴⁴ Faces About The Cross (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), pp. 34-47. (Cf. Living Zealously, pp. 76-89; and Sermons From Revelation pp. 75-78.)

shortest division comes first and his longest, last. The length of his subdivisions also varies considerably. They are from a few lines in length to three pages.⁴⁵

Chappell's apparent disregard of division proprieties tends to make his sermonic output somewhat uneven. From an investigation of one hundred and eighty sermons fifty-one, or twenty-eight per cent of them seem to this writer to be structurally symmetrical, while one hundred and twenty-nine or seventy-two per cent seem unsymmetrical.

Most of the outlines examined show progress within themselves. Transitions among, as well as within, divisions is good. The outlines likewise possess unity.

A study of the conclusion to a Chappell message reveals that the preacher here does not always sharply delineate, as in the introduction. There are instances in both his earlier and later sermons where no formal conclusion is used. An examination of one hundred and thirty sermons shows, in the opinion of this writer, that almost forty per cent of the messages have no formal ending as such. It seems that Dr. Chappell intends in these instances that the last division shall take care of any final considerations. The following example is a case in point. The preacher has

⁴⁵ When The Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 58; The Road to Certainty (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1940), pp. 54-57, 65-66.

been speaking about Jacob's thrilling discovery of the gate of heaven and of its effect on Jacob's afterlife. The last division of the sermon takes care of the application, or conclusion:

Here, then, is an experience full of richness, full of helpfulness, full of joy. It was an experience that was possible even in the dim centuries before Jesus came. It is an experience that is far more possible now. For we are living in the age of the Spirit. We are living when the Holy Spirit is ready to take the things of Christ and show them unto us. We are living in a time when every man, regardless of his circumstances, regardless of his past, may come into a saving and satisfying sense of God. A broad stairway stretches right from your feet into the open doorway of the house of many mansions. In the church, in the sick room, on the street, in the place of business, you may be enabled by the power of God to say, "This is the gate of heaven." May we claim our privileges, not only for the sake of our own needy lives, but for the sake of those about us whose needs are great as our own.⁴⁶

There are a few instances where in the absence of a formal conclusion, the last division does not take care of the matter.⁴⁷ In this case the sermon seems to end before it is finished.

⁴⁶ Sermons On Old Testament Characters (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1925, Sec. ed., 1931), p. 69; also, And The Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), pp. 74, 164; Sermons From Revelation (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 160.

⁴⁷ The Road To Certainty (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1940), p. 147; and Sermons From Psalms (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), pp. 44, 45; 63, 63, 77.

In his formal conclusions Dr. Chappell shows fondness for two types of ending: illustration and direct appeal. In one hundred thirty sermons illustrative endings occur forty-six times, or in thirty-five per cent of the sermons. Direct appeal is used thirty-four times, or in twenty-five per cent of the sermons. Only three times is a poem used as the conclusion.

Chappell's direct personal ending may be illustrated by the following excerpt:

Will you be saved tonight? Jesus is willing. He is willing to work an immediate deliverance. He is willing to receive you and make you every whit whole. But His willingness will go for nothing, His love will go for nothing, His cross will go for nothing, so far as you are concerned, unless you are willing. It all hinges there. It is a question of your own willingness and of that only. He has declared His willingness times innumerable. He has declared it in the pathetic language of the cross. And now He waits for you. Believe me, there is nothing that will keep you from His cleansing except your own unwillingness to come and be cleansed. Will you let Him speak this word to your heart? "I will. Be thou clean."⁴⁸

The conclusions are usually short, half a page or less in length.⁴⁹

The last words of a sermon-ending are expected to be particularly significant. Of one hundred and fifty sermons

⁴⁸ Sermons On New Testament Characters (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924, Sed. ed., 1931), p. 155.

⁴⁹ See for example, Faces About The Cross (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), pp. 33, 73, 98, 137-38.

chosen at random, two-thirds of them end with a brief quotation, sometimes a Bible verse, but more often the words of the text. Where Chappell's final word is not a quotation, it is likely to be a word of invitation to commitment, as in the following instance, "If you will open the door and let Jesus in, your lukewarmness will vanish as wintertime vanishes at the kiss of spring."⁵⁰

Materials. Dr. Chappell uses the Bible generously in his sermons. He may not be a Biblical exegete or even an expositor in the strict sense, yet his messages make the Bible a living book to his hearers and readers. He evidences what might be called strong Biblical imagination. With a few deft strokes he will recreate a scene or a character, and always in such a way that the passage becomes highly relevant to our own contemporary scene. He is nothing if not practical in his use of the Bible.

A study of a hundred sermons reveals an average of about seven Bible quotations to each sermon. A few of the sermons have no Bible quotations; some have one or two; still others have from ten to twenty. One message in Living Zestfully has twenty-four different Bible

⁵⁰Sermons On New Testament Characters (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924, Sec. ed., 1931), p. 77.

quotations plus a repetition of the text five times. On the whole it would seem that distribution of the quotations was rather uneven. The same one hundred sermons makes use on the average of from four to five Bible illustrations. There is a total average of twelve Bible quotations and Bible illustrations for each sermon.

Only a few times does the preacher state specifically where a Bible quotation is to be found.⁵¹ Occasionally he indicates the book from which a Bible quotation is taken. But in quoting the Bible he is apt to have no fuller reference than "Jesus says", "Peter mentions", or "Paul records".⁵² No doubt he felt it unnecessary to cite chapter and verse since not many these days seem inclined to carry their Bibles with them to church.

Bible quotations are less frequently repeated than Bible illustrations. In twenty of Dr. Chappell's books containing three hundred sermons, it was found that repetition of Bible quotations appeared in the following order of frequency: Acts 4:12 and Luke 11, 5-13, twelve times; Romans 8:28, eleven times; John 7:37 and Romans 7, ten times; John 7:17 and Matthew 23:37, nine times; Romans 3:23

⁵¹ Sermons From The Psalms (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), pp. 62, 131, 183; And The Prophets (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 142.

⁵² Sermons From The Miracles (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), pp. 13, 15; and Sermons From The Psalms, p. 20.

and Matthew 11:27, eight times; Galatians 6:7, I Corinthians 13, Psalms 23, and Isaiah 53, seven times; Psalms 8, Matthew 16:13-15, Luke 23:34, John 14:9, Philippians 4:13, and Revelation 3:20, five times.

In the twenty volumes referred to it was discovered that the Bible illustration most frequently used is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In these books he has at least forty more or less extended references to this story. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican he uses eighteen times in the same numbers of sermons; and the story of the Rich Young Ruler sixteen times. Samson is the Old Testament character most often referred to. Judas, the Rich Fool, and the malefactors are used twelve times each in these twenty volumes. Eleven homiletical usages are made of each of the following: the "birthright" story of Esau and Jacob, Jesus in Gethsemane, and the life of Moses. The Man with One Talent, the Good Samaritan, Elijah, and Paul in his Damascus experience is referred to ten times. From five to nine times illustrations appear from Job, Adam, Eve, The Widow and her mite, Abraham, Stephen, Pilate, and the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Chappell's simple but effective use of Scripture to illustrate a truth is seen in a passage from his sermon on the Rich Man:

Not only is memory independent of time and space, but of death also....When the Rich Man died, he left behind him most of the treasures to which he had clung with passionate devotion. He left his purple and fine linen. He left his palace. He left his wealth. He left his five brothers. But he took with him into that unseen country his memory. So it will be with us. We cannot live in the body always, but always we shall remember.⁵³

Another example of Chappell's practical use of Scripture is taken from his sermon on the Elder Brother:

...I have known some deeply religious folks who were also horribly religious. The Elder Son, of whom Jesus spoke, was a very religious man. He was clean and honorable; he was a hard worker. But there was no beauty in his religion. According to his own testimony, it was dire slavery. "All these years," he said, "do I slave for thee." The Pharisee who fasted twice a week and gave tithes was a religious man, but his religion repels rather than charms.⁵⁴

This preacher's sermons are rich not only in Bible materials, but also in extra-Biblical illustrations. "Let us tell stories," writes Dr. Chappell, and he goes on to say; "It is said of Jesus that he spoke many things unto them in stories, and without a story spake he not unto them." Every preacher ought to make a study of how

⁵³ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), pp 44, 45.

⁵⁴ Living Zestfully (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 30.

to tell a story.⁵⁵

Chappell draws generously from a variety of profane sources. So far as stories are concerned, he probably uses about twice as many from extra-Biblical fields as he does from the Bible. When a hundred sermons, examined for Bible illustrations, were also scrutinized for other kinds of illustrative material, a preponderance of material from life and from general literature was much in evidence.

The distribution of extra-Biblical illustrations among the sermons is quite uneven. There are sermons without a single illustration, and there are sermons with as many as from ten to fifteen "secular" illustrations. One message was found to contain twenty-four extra-Biblical and four Biblical illustrations.⁵⁶ Usually when in a message many illustrations were taken from secular life, there were few from the Bible, and conversely where Bible illustrations were in the ascendant there were few from other sources. These findings need not turn a reflection on the preacher. It seems evident that the number of illustrations used in a given sermon depended on the nature and aim of the

⁵⁵ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1931), p. 101.

⁵⁶ If I Were Young (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1945), pp. 9-20.

sermon rather than on some arbitrary homiletical rule or convenience.

The study of the hundred sermons shows that more than one third of the extra-Biblical illustrations used are taken from the preacher's own experience. About the same number is taken from current events. Almost one fifth are literary. The rest come from various and sundry sources such as science, history, and philosophy.

Dr. Chappell sometimes employs brief illustrations in a sermon, but he is more likely to employ extended illustrations. Once in a while he seems to use an illustration which in this writer's opinion is too long for its sermon context.⁵⁷

Chappell has intimated that he has always been a slow reader; that because of this he has felt handicapped in seeking a broad literary background for preaching.⁵⁸ His sermons, nevertheless, give evidence of much reading.

The study of the hundred sermons already referred to⁵⁹ indicates that while his illustrations specifically

⁵⁷ Sermons On New Testament Characters (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924, sec. ed., 1931), pp. 53-55.

⁵⁸ Values That Last (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 111; The Road To Certainty (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1940), p. 185.

⁵⁹ See p. 54.

from literature are not so numerous as his Bible illustrations, they are nevertheless always well chosen. The ratio of Bible quotation against literary quotations is 7:2 for these hundred sermons. In many sermons no poetry is quoted,⁶⁰ while in others there seems to be too much poetry. One sermon, for instance, contained six consecutive stanzas.⁶¹ Another had four stanzas in sequence, and again two more stanzas in sequence.⁶²

One feels Dr. Chappell's affection for the classics; he delights to quote profusely from them.⁶³ He makes use of the better-known English and American writers. Shakespeare he quotes from most often. The writer found more or less at random in Chappell volumes, references to these authors: Carlyle, Tennyson, Thackeray, Milton, Wordsworth, Browning, Kipling, Lowell, H. G. Wells, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Jack London, Bernard Shaw, and Charles Dickens. The

⁶⁰ See sermons on the following books: If I Were Young, Sermons On The Lord's Prayer, When The Church Was Young.

⁶¹ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 25.

⁶² Sermons On New Testament Characters (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924, sed. ed. 1931), pp. 131-32. See also, Sermons From The Miracles, pp. 31, 32; The Road To Certainty, pp. 125-26; The Sermon On The Mount, pp. 93, 94, 113-14, 176.

⁶³ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 149.

list shows that he quoted more English writers than American. Chappell also shows acquaintance with world literature; Greek mythology, Ovid, Caesar, Schiller, Goethe, Victor Hugo, Anatole France, and others.

The doctor has read widely in sermonic literature.⁶⁴ His sermons contain many allusions to and quotations from men like John Bunyan, Charles G. Finney, Henry Drummond, Stanley Jones, Kagawa and Dr. Sockman.⁶⁵ The preacher most quoted from is Bunyan. Chappell's historical references are usually to the better-known historical characters. He has allusions to Napoleon, Columbus, Lincoln, Luther, and John Wesley. He draws as much from the life of Luther as from the life of Wesley.

The preacher at times repeats in a sermon an illustration used in a previous message. Especially is this true of his later sermons. He is more likely to use a Bible illustration a second time. In general, at least about each of fifty of the secular illustrations is repeated a second or a third time in different sermons. Three illus-

⁶⁴ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 79, 80.

⁶⁵ Sermons From The Miracles (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), pp. 139, 208. See also, Ten Rules for Living, p. 171; The Sermon On The Mount, pp. 42, 85; Values That Last, pp. 51, 139.

trations repeated are the following: the girl he met when he was twelve years old; the picture of his father when he was sick; appointments he did not like. Repetition may come in this form, "As stated in our last message," or "As I suggested in my sermon."⁶⁶

On the whole Dr. Chappell illustrates wisely and well. He is pertinent, arresting, and clear. Only rarely does he use an illustration which, in the opinion of this writer, might be questionable, as for instance when he compares the humility of the Apostle John to the former Mrs. Wallis Simpson's feeling of unworthiness on the eve of her marriage to former King Edward VIII.⁶⁷ Another case in point is where Chappell relates, a bit melodramatically, the story of the painter who painted with his own blood.⁶⁸ Other artists sought to learn the secret of his fine work, only to give up in despair. It was when the painter died and an old half-healed wound was discovered above his heart that they understood. He had dipped his brush into his own blood.

⁶⁶ Ten Rules For Living (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), pp. 64, 113.

⁶⁷ Sermons From Revelation (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 24, 25, (Cf. Values That Last (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), pp. 64, 65.

⁶⁸ Sermons From The Miracles (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), pp. 202-03.

Better examples of and more typical of this preacher's ability to illustrate truth are the following:

...What is the lad to be? When Catholic parents ask this question, they answer with little doubt, "He is to be a Catholic." When Jewish parents ask this question, they, too, assert with confidence, "He is to be a Jew". But when Protestant parents ask the same question, so often they answer, "The Lord only knows!...⁶⁹

This is an innocent sounding text. It looks as harmless as the chubby fist of an infant. Its touch seems as soft and velvety as the petal of a rose. You would never dream that it carried a concealed dagger. You would never think it came with dynamite in its hand. It would never occur to you that hidden behind its seeming harmlessness are the fangs of a serpent....⁷⁰

Style. Dr. Chappell's sermons are always those of the careful, conscientious workman. Once his topic is decided upon, he formulates his outline, then develops it. Finally, he submits to the discipline of writing out his sermon word by word.⁷¹

In the main he is narrative and descriptive with occasional flashes of dramatic instinct. But he is always

⁶⁹ Living Zestfully (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 55.

⁷⁰ Familiar Failures (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), p. 47.

⁷¹ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 85.

less concerned about artistic effect than simplicity and clarity of style. Concerning style he writes:

...If we are to interest our congregation, we must speak with simplicity. No longer are people going to come to our churches in large numbers just to puzzle themselves over what under the sun we are talking about. Every preacher ought to search his soul with what Billy Sunday said to the ministers of a certain city: "The trouble with some of you is that your people will go to hell while they are trying to figure out what you mean." The modern minister is speaking to the best educated congregation the world has ever known. They are people therefore, who know enough to appreciate simplicity.⁷²

We are not to address ourselves to the cultured few, but to the common man:

...The minister who addresses himself to the few highly educated people who may be in the congregation, and forgets that larger group who are sure to be there, is being slightly silly if not positively wicked. Of course, he should have something to say to the intellectually elite, but it is this group that will appreciate simplicity more than any other.⁷³

Dr. Chappell always expresses himself in lucid, effective English. One authority says of him, "In the reading, one almost never has to glance back in order to be sure what he means;"⁷⁴ and then he goes on to show how natural it was that Chappell, having lived close to the

⁷² Ibid., pp. 54, 55.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁷⁴ Andrew Watterson Blackwood, Preaching In Time Of Reconstruction (New York: The Pulpit Press, 1945), p. 36.

soil, should adopt the language of the common man:

...As a boy out on the farm this man seemed to have lived among the common people long enough to learn their language and be able to read their hearts. Now he must find that many of them have moved to town, and not a few may be well-to-do. Nevertheless, he knows that any one of them can tell the difference between a colt that has been gentled from the day it was foaled, and one that has grown up wild until it has to be tamed. It can be no accident that the vast majority of strong preachers have been lovers of the open country and friends of the common man.⁷⁵

The Chappell messages are good examples of that kind of pictorial effectiveness that should be the aim of all young preachers. Sentences generally are striking, and by no means bookish. A child of twelve years of age would readily follow Chappell whether he is preaching at the beginning or at the close of his ministerial career. Two sermons are quoted from below. The first is from his first book of sermons:

...For most of us that is the last word. There is nothing else to be said. The worst possible has already happened. The grimmest of all grim tragedies has already been enacted. Lazarus is dead--the nurse may now go home. The physician, faithful to the last, may return to his office. Medicines, poultices, ministering hands are no longer needed. Disease has done its grim work--Lazarus is dead.

What an old tragedy this is, how commonplace. When the hearse passed you on the street yesterday you hardly turned your head. It is soon forgotten. It is so usual. It is so ordinary. And yet how new is

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 36, 37.

this tragedy....⁷⁶

In this next excerpt from a late volume of sermons, he is discussing the outcome, for the Church of the Church's praying for Peter while he was in prison:

They released the power of God upon him for whom they prayed. Simon was not always a brave man. There were times when he played the coward. But look at him on what was supposed to be the last night of his life. He was bound with two chains. There was a soldier on either side of him. There was a guard just outside the door of his cell. But in spite of his hopeless situation Simon was able to sleep. This quietness, this inward peace, I take it, was born of prayer. As Paul had declared, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" was garrisoning his mind and heart through Christ Jesus.⁷⁷

Only rarely in this preacher does one come across a sentence of seven or eight lines long.⁷⁸ The majority of the sentences are short and simple. The writer of this thesis, whose Scandinavian upbringing renders his English vocabulary rather limited, had no difficulty in understanding Chappell's language. In this may be found some proof of the simplicity of that language. Here may be part of the evidence why "the common people heard him gladly."

⁷⁶ The Village Tragedy (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1921), p. 11.

⁷⁷ When The Church Was Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 149.

⁷⁸ And The Prophets (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 182.

Dr. Chappell shows a liking for the question form of sentence. Sometimes this kind of sentence may omit the verb. Sometimes the sentence is only a single word like "Why?". The study of more than a hundred sermons discloses the fact that there is an average of thirteen questions to a sermon. The volume, If I Were Young, has an average of ten and one-half questions per sermon, while Living Zestfully contains an average of seventeen questions. The largest number of questions which occur in any one sermon is thirty-two.⁷⁹ This question emphasis is an indication of the conversational style of this preacher.

Chappell's sentences, while clear, show at times a certain freedom of construction which composition textbooks would discourage. For instance, he is likely to begin a sentence all too frequently with the conjunction "and" or "but". In the same paragraph, he will use "and" several times⁸⁰ with which to begin a sentence. Not only will he begin paragraphs with "and",⁸¹ but even

⁷⁹ Sermons On Old Testament Characters (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1925, Sec. ed., 1931), pp. 29-39.

⁸⁰ Sermons On The Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), pp. 17, 78, 175, 190, 213, 219, 220.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 106, 111, 118.

transitions between sermon divisions sometimes begin with "and".⁸² A few expressions are often repeated, as for instance, "When I was a boy", "My brother and I", and "On the farm where I lived as a boy".

In the pulpit Chappell studiously avoids theological and doctrinal words. Bible terms such as "born again", "faith", and "witness", he uses freely. He is not averse to coining expressions like, "Dr. Luke,"⁸³ "Mr. Titus, pastor of First Church, Crete",⁸⁴ "Mr. Happy",⁸⁵ "Pastor of First Church, Death Valley",⁸⁶ "Mrs. Lot",⁸⁷ "The Annual Conference at Jerusalem".⁸⁸

Paragraphs vary in length from one-fourth to three-fourths of a page. Paragraph unity is carefully adhered to. For instance, in the message entitled, "The Unfinished

⁸² Sermons From The Parables (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1933), p. 41.

⁸³ Values That Last (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 156.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 77.

⁸⁷ Feminine Faces (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1942), pp. 14, 15. (Cf. Sermons On Old Testament Characters, p. 40).

⁸⁸ Sermons On The Lord's Prayer (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1934), p. 31.

Sermon",⁸⁹ three paragraphs selected almost at random fall in sequence, each treating its own unit of thought. First, Felix did not fail because of ignorance; second, he failed because he refused to give God a chance; third, he failed because he was unwilling to pay the price. Unity of paragraph construction and simple progress such as this, are typical of Chappell's style.

Literary imagination is not pronounced in this preacher. Original figures of speech are lacking. On the other hand many Biblical metaphors are to be found, as for example: door, bread of life, water of life, fairest of ten thousand, rose of sharon, manna, and leeks and garlic of Egypt.

Chappell likes to make occasional use of exclamation: "And how right Paul was!" "Poor fellow!" "Certainly!" "What a marvelous power memory is!" "What a hard life he lived!", and "Yet how rich he lived."

This writer, found little evidence of change between the style of the earlier and later sermons.

Other considerations. The strongest appeal in the sermons of Clovis Chappell seems to be to the will. Such emphasis as the following is constantly occurring:

⁸⁹ Values That Last (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), pp. 19, 20.

What, then, is this condition of knowing God? Listen to the words of Jesus: "If any man will do his will," or, as Keymouth has it, "If any one is willing to do his will." Notice what the Master is saying. The emphasis is on the word "willing." Being willing to do the will of Jesus is far more than merely wishing to do it. Wishing has to do with the wishbone, willing with the backbone. If we have lived to any purpose at all, we must realize how utterly futile is mere wishing. We may wish without ever lifting a hand. We may wish and sit perfectly still. But to will means action. The man who wills gets busy....⁹⁰

Chappell also makes strong appeal to the emotions; but always that man's will may be moved. For all his careful avoidance of the sentimental, he does not hesitate employing a wholesome story that might move the hearts of men. Once he said, "In selecting stories we need not be afraid of one that has in it a touch of tears. Our modern congregations are not suffering unduly from too much emotion."⁹¹ These two examples from Sermons From The Psalms show the quality of his emotional appeal:

It is said that one day in London an atheist sought to make sport of an unlettered man who had been converted only a few years before. "Do you know anything about Jesus Christ?" he asked. "Yes, by the grace of God, I do," was the answer. "When was he born?" was the next question. The ignorant saint gave an incorrect answer. "How old was he when he died?" Again the answer was incorrect. Other

⁹⁰ Living Zestfully (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 68.

⁹¹ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 101.

questions were asked with the same result until the atheist said with a sneer: "See, you do not know so much about Jesus as you thought, do you?" "I know all too little," was his modest answer, "but I know this: Three years ago I was one of the worst drunkards in the East End of London. Three years ago my wife was a broken-hearted woman, and my children were as afraid of me as if I had been a wild beast. Today I have one of the happiest homes in London, and when I come home at the close of the day my wife and children are glad to see me. Jesus Christ has done this for me. This I know."⁹²

And again:

Here, for instance, is a mother whose only laddie is gone from home. Now still the house is and how desperately lonely! Then there is a knock at the door, a little slip of yellow paper is put into her hand. "Will be home tomorrow," it reads, and the name signed to it is that of her boy. A moment later the house is just as still and empty as it was before the message came. But in spite of that, the loneliness is gone from the mother's heart and a great joy has come in its place. And to you who are passing through a long night of weeping, I bring you a message. Hear it, and your heart will sing. A guest is coming to you. He is on his way. Soon he will turn the knob of your door and enter. Joy is coming in the morning. Nobody can be utterly cast down who believes that.⁹³

What of this preacher's imagination? Henry Ward Beecher regarded imagination as "the most important of all the factors which go to make the preacher."⁹⁴ All great

⁹² Sermons From The Psalms (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1931), pp. 94, 95.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 149-50.

⁹⁴ Yale Lectures, p. 109, quoted after John A. Broadus, On The Preparation And Delivery of Sermons (New York: Harper & Brothers, New and Revised Edition, 1944), p. 279.

preachers were outstanding in this quality. Clovis Chappell's ability as a preacher is due in no small measure to his practical imagination in the use of the Bible--his power to reproduce with fresh insight a Bible scene or a Bible story. So appealing is Chappell in this regard that an example is herewith furnished at some length. Here "Biblical" imagination runs freely, yet effectively, in a colloquial vein:

Years ago a citizen of Palestine, possessed of great wealth, heard that an army of invasion was marching upon his defenseless little nation. He at once set about the task of making his treasure secure. There being no bank in which he might deposit it, he did what was so often done in that day. He slipped out into a field, in the dead hours of night, and buried it. The army came, took him captive, carried him into exile, where he died with the secret of his buried treasure closely locked within his heart. Then the slow years slipped by till now a certain farmer is cultivating the very field where this treasure lies buried. He is a poor man, far too poor to own the field. He is only a renter. He has never managed to get on. The wolf has always howled fairly close to his door. Life is a bit of a treadmill for him. All his days are rather dull and tame. He toils in a rather listless fashion, for too many commonplace days have largely killed his expectancy. He has little hope for the dawn of a better tomorrow.

Then one morning he rises to face the routine that he has faced the day before. Once more he is out in the field, trudging his unexciting way behind his plow. But little as he dreams of the possibility of it, he is on the threshold of a great discovery. Life for him is about to take on a new departure. Soon something is going to happen that will bring him a thrill, joyous and exciting beyond his dreams. For suddenly his plow scrapes against something. At first he thinks it is only a rock. But he looks and there is a shimmering mark upon a bit of metal. He looks more closely still to find that this bit of metal is a part of a chest. His

plow has loosened the lid, for its fastenings have been weakened by the gnawing teeth of the years. His heart now leaps into his throat. With hands all atremble he lifts the loosened top and looks within. He can hardly believe that he is not dreaming, for there before him, all aglitter in the sunlight, is a heap of treasure, gold and silver and precious jewels. Then, in the realization of his bewildering good fortune, he hides the treasure and hurries away to buy the field, regardless of its cost. He knows that the wealth that he has discovered is so fabulous that no price can possibly be too great for him to pay in order to possess it. Thus does Jesus tell us of his estimate of the worth of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁹⁵

Like all outstanding preachers, Dr. Chappell in his message often shows a certain freshness of point of view. Without being profound on the one hand, or commonplace on the other, he sometimes gives a new slant to the idea to show its relevance in an unusual setting, or to expand its application. He is hardly a "path-breaker" into new realms of Biblical truth. He lacks the deep intellectual penetration of some of the great preachers. Yet he often gives new emphasis, if not significance, to the old truth. He is by no means a servile imitator. Allusions to a variety of source materials there are, but the ideas of others seem necessary to set "his mental and spiritual machinery in motion."⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Sermons From The Parables (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1933), pp. 49, 50.

⁹⁶ Anointed To Preach (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 80.

This outstanding southern preacher is not without a sense of humor. There is always the danger of a preacher stooping to tell stories which have no more point than to amuse. Chappell never does this. His anecdotes and illustrations are characterized by moral earnestness. Whatever the touches of humor in the Chappell messages they never offend good taste.

Concerning the use of humor in the pulpit Dr. Chappell writes:

If it comes natural, we need not hesitate either to use clean and wholesome humor. Laughter and tears are nextdoor neighbors. Humor does not belong simply to the theater, to the movies, to the club, to the lodge, to the home--everywhere, in fact, except in the sanctuary. There is of course a certain type of humor that has no place there--or anywhere else. But laughter is just as pious as tears. The minister who has no sense of humor is very prone to major on minors. Blessed, therefore, is the minister who has sufficient humor to "sweeten bitter things with gentle laughter."⁹⁷

This preacher's use of humor is very sparing. Several of the books of sermons examined showed no trace of it. Others had but one or two instances. The volumes, Sermons From Revelation and Chappell's Special Day Sermons, each contain three humorous passages, the most found in any one book. Dr. Chappell's wit may be referred to as of the "dry" variety, a sample of which is as follows:

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 102-03.

...You have perhaps heard of the small boy who was accustomed to carry a written excuse to his teacher when for some reason he had to miss a day from school or had to be late. One day the teacher asked him to bring his birth certificate when he came to school next day. But the lad forgot it. Therefore, when he reached school, he hurried to his teacher to tell her, "I forgot my excuse for being born." Well, that is a type of forgetfulness that is too common.⁹⁸

But for all that can be said about a man's preaching, this much remains to be said: A sermon is not a sermon unless it helps meet human needs. This calls for application. Chappell's messages are rich in this regard. Always, directly or indirectly, the preacher is making application of truth. Usually the application is indirect, but he is frequently direct. He does not hesitate to use the pronoun "you" on occasion. Not one sermon was without direct application. In the opinion of this writer, a good example of indirect application is the following one:

As we study these men, therefore, we find them, in spite of their greatness, to be possessed of many of our human failties. Some of them were distressingly lacking in a sense of humor. That is always crippling. Some of them, I can well imagine, were a bit hard to live with. One of them, at least, was an old bachelor. That types him at once. All old bachelors are inclined to be cranky. Such are often lovely cranks, but cranks nonetheless. Some of them uttered their words of burning rebuke as if they took a kind of harsh joy in them. These

⁹⁸ If I Were Young (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 22. (Other examples: Feminine Faces, p. 144; Chappell's Special Day Sermons, pp. 48-49, 98, 113.

preachers were all human.⁹⁹

A typical example of direct application is this one:

What do you propose to do with the words of Jesus? Do you mean to applaud them, to look at them as lovely dreams, as beautiful ideals and nothing more? If so, you can promise yourself little today or tomorrow but tragedy. This is the case because these words are true. They are true as the law of sowing and reaping is true. They are true as the law of gravity is true. The man who assumes that the law of gravity will operate at one time but not at another may be wicked, but he is above all else silly. The same is true of the man who refuses to act upon the words of Jesus. Wicked may he be, but above all else he is playing the fool. The only wisdom is to take Jesus seriously. It is thus and only thus that we can build both for time and for eternity. May God help us thus to be sensible.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ And The Prophets (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), pp. 10, 11.

¹⁰⁰ If I Were Young (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 140.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

A multitude of sermon books these days deal with problems concerning human relationships. The strong Biblical tone reminiscent of much of the preaching of yesterday is lacking. Chappell's messages are essentially Biblical. Our age needs Bible preaching.

Young preachers, especially, may benefit by studying Chappell's sermons. They will realize, for instance, the advantages of using a text. They will learn how to organize materials simply yet effectively. They will discover the power of Biblical and daily-life illustrations, and they will be inspired to speak the language of common man.

In accounting for Clovis Chappell's success as a preacher, one must take into consideration the Christian influence of a God-fearing home, of parents whose main concern was that their children find the Christian values in life, and who themselves lived exemplary lives before their children. The beauty and the austerity of the Tennessee country and the ruggedness of life lived on a Tennessee farm had a profound influence in moulding the life of this man of God.

Chappell is an example of a man who although not unusually gifted achieved a degree of fame that might well be the envy of many a preacher. What powers in the man himself, besides the priceless value of a Godly life, helped make him? As in the case of all men of marked achievement, Dr. Chappell loved his work. He never seemed to do it in the spirit of drudgery. In all his ministry he showed an unusual capacity for hard work and a spirit of application that is nothing short of remarkable.

If "the common people heard him gladly" it was because there was a heart, an intensely human heart, pulsating behind every message uttered. Dr. Chappell loved men.

Few men among preachers have held so high the primary calling of the ministry. Chappell's energies were directed primarily toward preaching. Let others do as they will, this man will put first things first.

He preached with unction. He prized the art of homiletics, and prepared himself carefully in this regard; but he long ago learned that the success of the sermon is in something bigger than art. His dependence on God--"by my Spirit"--is the foundation of Chappell's success as a preacher.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

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